

A threat became real yesterday when a U.S. senator introduced legislation to remove more than \$2.3 million from local projects in response to the Berkeley City Council's controversial opposition to the Marine recruiting center in Downtown Berkeley.

Sen. Jim DeMint and five other senators introduced the Semper Fi Act of 2008 in Congress yesterday. The act will strip spending earmarked for at least six projects in Berkeley from a Senate appropriations bill and give the funds to the Marines.

"Berkeley City Council members have shown complete ingratitude to our military and their families, and the city doesn't deserve a single dime of special pet project handouts," DeMint said in a statement.

Last Tuesday, the City Council approved two resolutions which supported protestors outside of the military recruitment center and asked the city manager to send a letter to the recruiters saying they are "unwelcome and uninvited intruders."

The legislators called the language offensive to the country's military.

If the act passes, earmarked spending that would be removed includes \$243,000 for the Chez Panisse Foundation's lunch program and \$975,000 for UC Berkeley's Matsui Center on Politics and Public Service.

"These people have nothing to do with the council's action," said City Councilmember Gordon Wozniak. "They should not be penalized just because they happen to live in Berkeley."

Rep. John Campbell, along with over 40 co-sponsors, also introduced a companion bill in the House of Representatives, said his communications director Vartan Djihanian.

But Sen. Barbara Boxer, who proposed some of the funding for the projects, said groups in need of the funding shouldn't be punished, said Natalie Ravitz, Boxer's communications director, in an e-mail.

"Senator DeMint may not like what the Berkeley City Council has to say but to punish the children, police, first responders and university for something they had nothing to do with is just plain wrong," Ravitz said.

Berkeley City Councilmembers Laurie Capitelli and Betty Olds submitted an item for Tuesday's council meeting to rescind the decision to send the military center the controversial letter.

"I determined long before (DeMint) made his inflammatory statement that I had made a mistake and that I was going to introduce an item to correct it," Capitelli said.

Olds said the federal threat to cut funds did not play a role in their decision to create the new resolution.

"We're rescinding it because we think it was wrong to do," she said.

Wozniak, who voted against last week's resolutions, said he considered the language offensive but still thinks the federal bill is unreasonable.

"(The resolution) was offensive to people who personally lost loved ones," he said. "But I think it's equally bad for U.S. Representatives or Senators to threaten their constituents to take away their money."

UC Berkeley spokesperson Marie Felde said UC staff has contacted DeMint and his staff to clarify that the campus and city are separate institutions.

"We think it's unfortunate that the senators would target the University of California campus simply because the campus is located in the city of Berkeley," she said. "The facts apparently had no impact."

Some council members say they don't think the bill will be passed.

"I'd invite the Senator to come out here and talk about it," Capitelli said. "I'm not going to worry about it. I would hope that cooler heads would prevail."